

(Washington, D.C.) – A bill passed today in the House Committee on Education and Labor authorizing \$6.4 billion over five years for school construction includes funding to help schools become more energy efficient. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12), a member of the Committee, included an initiative in the 21st Century High-Performing Public School Facilities Act to provide schools with federal funding to make energy efficient upgrades. The legislation would authorize \$6.4 billion for school facility projects in Fiscal Year 2010 and ensure that school districts quickly receive funds for school modernization, renovation, and repairs that create healthier, safer, and more energy-efficient teaching and learning climates. The bill awaits approval in the full House of Representatives.

“Today, we are one step closer to providing cash-strapped school systems with the resources they need to invest in energy efficient upgrades,” Holt said. “Instead of using so much money on unnecessary building costs we could be using energy savings to enable school districts to hire new teachers or purchase new textbooks.”

As was written in Holt’s School Building Enhancement Act, the bill provides for state educational agencies to develop a school energy efficiency quality plan and to provide technical assistance to local education agencies for energy efficient school building design, construction, and renovation.

The 21st Century High-Performing Public School Facilities Act would require that funds be used for projects that meet one of three widely recognized green building standards: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, Energy Star, or Collaborative for High Performance Schools. The bill would allow states to use funds to develop a database of public school facilities in the state and their energy use.

At Holt’s request, the bill also would require states to measure and report on the carbon footprint of each school. Schools will be able to set goals for reducing their greenhouse gasses along with their energy use with the eventual goal of becoming carbon neutral. Today, buildings are responsible for over one third of the greenhouse gas emissions in the United States.

Holt also included language in the legislation to ensure that veteran-owned businesses receive contracting preference for school construction, as is currently the case for small, minority, and women-owned businesses.

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